

# Understanding the World's Ocean and Climate

Join NOAA Fisheries for an exploration of the ocean and climate and how they interact. The series runs Thursdays through June 3.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### How does U.S. seafood get to market?

Harvesting seafood is an important part of our heritage in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Although it may seem as simple as putting a hook in the water and catching a fish, ensuring that the harvest of fish is sustainable is a complex process. Before seafood reaches your dinner plate, thousands of people, including the dedicated scientists and managers at NOAA Fisheries, work hard to ensure that there will be fish for future generations. Throughout this chapter, you'll learn more about all of the different people involved in fisheries.

**Getting fish to the market: Safe and sustainable seafood!** Fish is processed, shipped and sold in markets around the world. Seafood may be packaged fresh, frozen, whole or in pieces, smoked, pickled, canned or processed into



frozen meals. Where do you buy your seafood? Whether you buy your seafood at the grocery store or the farmer's market, be sure to ask where it was harvested and try to buy local or from U.S. waters. If you live by the coast you can probably buy seafood directly from a fisherman — you can't get much fresher than that!

**Did you know?** To ensure safety and health standards, NOAA Fisheries' Seafood Inspection Program offers a variety of services. To learn tips about buying safe and sustainable seafood, check out the section, "Are you seafood savvy?"

**FISHERMEN: Fisheries on the West Coast and in Alaska are multimillion dollar industries!** Fishing communities of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska include commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries that contribute significantly to the local and national economy. Fishermen help keep their fisheries sustainable by supporting science and management during the fishing season. On fishing boats or on the dock, you may find a fishery observer collecting important data such as how many fish were caught, what species were found in the catch or collecting samples to determine the sex and age of the

fish. This information is used for in-season management of the fishery and to know when to close a fishery for the season. It also helps scientists understand the impact of fishing on fish populations.

**MANAGEMENT: Managing a fishery is a complicated task.** NOAA Fisheries uses an ecosystem approach to manage fisheries, which means that social, economic and ecosystem information is factored into the decision-making process. Managers create regulations with scientific input and feedback from fishermen, local tribes and other fishing experts. These regulations tell fishermen when, where, how and how much they are allowed to harvest, so fish stocks remain at healthy levels.

**SCIENCE: Learning from science!** Scientists provide the fundamental biological and ecological research to explain processes that influence the distribution and abundance of fish populations. Scientists study multiple factors that influence fish populations, taking into account their entire ecosystem. Along with studying the distribution and abundance of fishes, scientists also analyze



Fishing boats in Dutch Harbor, Alaska. (Photo: Karna McKinney/NOAA Fisheries)

their age and growth, diet, reproduction and special habitat requirements. All of this information is compiled and analyzed in a document called a stock assessment, so managers can determine how many fish can be sustainably harvested from a population.

**POLICY AND LAWS** Whether on land or at sea, there are laws that help protect us and our resources. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is the principle law governing U.S. marine fisheries. The MSA mandates that NOAA Fisheries limit the amount of fish harvested to prevent or end overfishing. On the West Coast and in Alaska, NOAA Fisheries staff work with fishery management councils to develop and implement fishery management plans. The council process involves input from many groups, including scientists, fishermen and managers to ensure our nation's fishery resources remain available for the enjoyment of future generations.

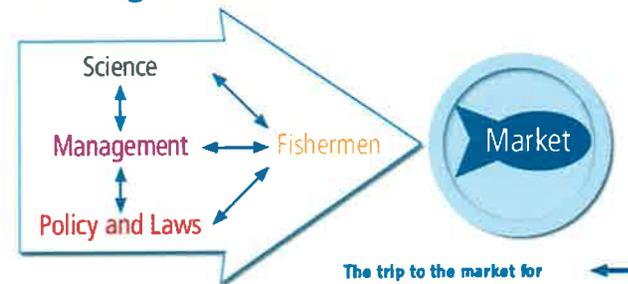
### Are you seafood savvy?

Seafood is sustainable when the population of that species of fish is managed in a way that provides for today's needs without damaging the ability of the species to reproduce and be available for future generations.

For more information about seafood, go to Fishwatch at: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/)



## Getting fish to market



**The trip to the market for the nation's seafood is a complex process that involves thousands of individuals.**

Join us next week to learn more about how you can help protect our fisheries, marine wildlife and coastal habitat.

### Principles

**Ocean Literacy Principle 6**  
The ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected.

### Get Hooked!

Participate in a local "Fishing Derby" in your classroom and learn more about sustainable practices by going to the featured content section of the NIE website, [seattletimes.com/nie](http://seattletimes.com/nie). If you have any questions about this activity please e-mail: [nwr.education@noaa.gov](mailto:nwr.education@noaa.gov).